

L.C. C. 1

The terrible Calamities that are occasioned by War,
and the Blessedness of a People that live under
the Protection of God.

A

S E R M O N

Preached at the
SUNDAY MORNING LECTURE

In the Parish Church of

St. G I L E S, CRIPPLEGATE,

And afterwards at

S T R A T F O R D - B O W,

November the 29th, 1759.

B E I N G

The Day appointed by Proclamation for a GENERAL THANKSGIVING to Almighty God, for vouchsafing such signal Successes to his Majesty's Arms, both by Sea and Land, particularly, for defeating the French army in CANADA, and the taking of QUEBEC, and for seasonably granting at this Time, a most plentiful Harvest.

To which, have since been added,

Some Observations on Divine Providence; and, Remarks
on particular Parts of the Discourse.

*By the Reverend Mr. THOMAS SMITH,
Preacher of the said Morning Lecture, and likewise of the Thursday
Afternoon Lecture in that Church.*

These Lectures are both supported by the Worshipful Company of Haberdashers.

L O N D O N:

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P S A L. xcvii. 1.

*The Lord is king, the earth may be glad thereof,
yea the multitude of the isles, may be glad
thereof.*

Considerations on the mischiefs of a precipitant will, and the miseries occasioned by ungovernable appetites, must greatly perplex our minds, and cause the most alarming apprehensions, was not Providence to intervene, and in the midst of our distractions often change our gloomy ideas, by turning our bitterest evils into good, and making them the occasion of joy, and the means of illustrating God's glory.

And though the divine proceedings are frequently imperceptible, and beyond the ken of us ignorant short-sighted mortals, yet this we may safely conclude, and peremptorily assert, that the all-perfect Being cannot err, but always acts agreeably to the eternal rules of justice, and to the unchangeable laws of truth and righteousness.

ness. For justice is an essential attribute of the Deity, and God is no respecter of persons ; his favours are not confined to any, nor his blessings partially distributed ; but in every nation he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. God deals with men as moral agents, as creatures capable of discerning their duty, and at liberty faithfully to discharge it. Though providential occurrences be ever so perplexing, or divine judgments ever so surprising ; notwithstanding these external discouragements, and the horror they create in the mind, we may with the greatest confidence affirm, that good men are safe in the hands of God, and that no earthly power can endanger their safety, while they are under God's protection. Should we be plunged into such distresses, as appear to human eye insurmountable, and beyond the possibility of a removal, the supreme Being can easily dissipate our fears, can instantly remove those scenes of horror, and immediately work out our deliverance, though man, with all his skill and sagacity, cannot.

Whatever commotions are raised in the earth, or desolations envious minds may threaten us with, they cannot exceed the divine permission, or resist the penetrating operations of Omnipotence ; because, *he that stilleth the raging of the sea, and said to the proud waves, hitherto shall ye go, and no further, has also set bounds to the wickedness of men, over which they cannot pass.* Were we firmly persuaded of

of these divine limitations, and that God governs the world in righteousness, that we are really the objects of his care, instead of presuming to scrutinize the divine conduct, or to solve the dispensations of Providence, it much better becomes such bold inquirers, patiently to acquiesce in the divine arbitration, and inflexibly to depend upon him, whose love is unchangeable, and whose power is all-sufficient.

Nothing more betrays the presumption of finite creatures, than censuring the methods of an infinitely wise Creator, because they are unacquainted with his counsels, and unable to account for those seeming irregularities, which appear in the immense system of Providence; for there is great reason to believe, that those disorders may be examples of exquisite harmony, and the most beautiful contrivances, since we are assured there will come a day, when the wisdom of God will be exactly displayed, and be as conspicuous in his moral government, as it is evident in the natural world.

So that what does now appear matter of objection, may then be matter of the highest admiration; therefore we ought to suspend our judgments, and not to pry into things above the reach of our capacity, but learn to discard every dishonourable thought of God, and to maintain the profoundest reverence, for his incomprehensible Majesty. By thus employing our faculties, and humbly contemplating the divine

divine nature and attributes, we shall so discover our own ignorance and the unmeasurableness of God's glorious perfections, as will constrain us to use the apostle's language, and to cry out in his rapturous expressions, *O the deptb of the wisdom, and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out.*

Let us then not criticise on the works of God, or hearken to the prejudices of our vain imaginations, but implicitly submit to that plan of government, which infinite goodness suggested, and infinite wisdom and power formed and executed. Because, this amiable Being, who is universally acknowledged infinitely just, is said to have the tenderest bowels of compassion, and to be so concerned for the welfare of mankind, that he really designs their perfection and happiness, and has made all things subservient thereto. Were divine truths candidly considered, however intricate things may appear at present, we should have no reason to doubt, but that God, upon folding up the whole scheme, will assuredly bring this gloomy and perplexing scene to a beautiful and uniform period, and though clouds and darkness are round about God's throne, yet we have this solid ground of consolation, that *righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his seat* *.

Would

* Some of the *Hebrews* conceive, *Moses* was the author of this, as well as the rest of those Psalms, which want an inscription, and indeed he excelled in this faculty, of composing hymns,

Would we then be freed from our fears, and the terrible surmises occasioned by malevolent gratifications, we must mortify all illegal inclinations, and shake off the galling chains of iniquity, that being delivered from the painful fetters of sin, we may chearfully exercise our duty, and conscientiously discharge the several branches thereof. Thus assiduously employed, and devoutly engaged, we need not question the protection of him, who reigns over all the kingdoms of the earth, and disposes of thrones and dominions at his pleasure. So that while God sets at the helm, and keeps the reins of government in his hands, we may be absolutely sure of his defence, and that no weapon, formed, against his chosen, shall prosper.

Since God is our only support, and his Providence our principal safety, we should behave towards him with suitable reverence, and employ our best faculties to secure his favour, that we may never forfeit the divine protection, nor fall under the divine resentment.

When Omnipotency is engaged in our behalf, let the devices of the crafty be ever so deep, or their designs the most artfully laid, such as

hymns, as we learn from *Exod. xv. Deut. xxxiii.* and might on some other occasions, as well as the overthrow of *Pharaoh* in the red-sea, make a song of triumph, after some of those great victories which God gave them over their enemies, which was in use before his time, as it appears by the fragments of ancient songs, recorded in this book. See the argument to the 97th *Psalms*, by *Bp. Patrick.*

conform to the rules of divine government, have no reason to dread their subtle contrivances, nor be dismayed about their evil imaginations. For he that is infinite in wisdom, and irresistible in power, is not unacquainted with the closest combinations, but understands the darkest schemes of iniquity, and can instantly apply such methods, as will defeat the most pernicious designs, and bring to nought the most horrid inventions.

The constant sense of which, and an unshaken belief in the divine superintendence, will wonderfully support our fainting spirits; and universally revive the desponding hearts of men, when deeply affected with the mournful scenes of life, and overwhelmed with its dreadful calamities. So that not only we, who are subjects of Christ's kingdom, and blessed with the glorious gospel of God, have abundant cause to *rejoice that the Lord is king*, and that this almighty Architect, formed the world, and can support this stately fabric, independently of his creatures, and without their assistance; but even those that live at the greatest distance, and in the remotest islands, are vastly indebted to this divine Ruler, and under various and innumerable obligations to be thankful.

Whatever extraordinary blessings some nations possess, others that are not so highly favoured, have no just cause for complaint, or to accuse the divine Distributer of partiality. Because, God is not a debtor to any, nor is his liberality matter of strict justice; but his favours

vours proceed from mere goodness, and are the effects of stupendous love ; therefore all mankind, indiscriminately are obliged to worship God, and with united voices to declare his goodness, and with reverence * to proclaim the praises of him ; who *maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.*

This will more evidently appear, if we make a few general observations, and consider the eminent dangers that surround us, and the miseries continually attending us, and the impossibility of escaping those evils, without the divine interposition, and the immediate help of Omnipotence. I say, frequently ruminating on these things, and how insensibly sinful creatures are betrayed, by the warm solicitations of eager appetites, and the vigorous allurements of a treacherous world, should make us heartily to triumph, that there is an intelligent Being, who presides over all the powers of nature, and does *whatever he pleases in the armies of heaven, as well as among the inhabitants of the earth, and that none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what doest thou.* Were it not for God our state would be extremely miserable, and we should be unable to stand our ground,

* Nothing is more true than what St. *Austin* somewhere quotes from *Varro*, that they who are religious revere, and the superstitious fear God. Since the Saint seems not to regard the scriptures, by certain doctrines which he has advanced, it would have been well, if he had thoroughly considered these doctrines, and learned from an Heathen to correct his own theology.

or to make a safe voyage through this tempestuous world ; but we should be always obnoxious to dangers, and liable to be lost in deep waters.

When * men are violently ambitious, and vehemently thirst after earthly glory, they omit no opportunity to gratify their pride, nor object to the most detestable measures, provided they can accomplish their haughty views, and the end of their aspiring pursuits. But if such men are sharply repulsed, and see no possibility of humouring their vanity, their ambition is often turned into fury, and carried to such an unsufferable height, that nothing can asswage their wrath, or mitigate their malicious resentment. When men are thus poisoned with ambitious revenge, and their tempers festered with repeated opposition, their minds are so enraged at those contradictions, that they instantly meditate the ruin of their opposers, and leave no methods untried to work their destruction.

Nor is this implacable spirit confined to the vulgar, nor does it meet with a reception only in the cottage, but this restless disposition frequently ascends the throne, and operates so powerfully in the breasts of princes, that under

* The mother of *Nero* was an eminent example of ambition, for being informed her son would come to be emperor, and that it would occasion her death, she ambitiously replied, provided he does but reign, let him kill me. So powerful was the spirit of ambition in this woman, that she preferred her son's being emperor, before the preservation of her own life.

der colour of maintaining their supposed rights, or recovering what they imagine others wrongfully possess, they violate the most solemn treaties, and engage in the most desperate undertakings. Quartels of this nature, when obstinately pursued, render the peaceable voice of reason ineffectual, or of little signification towards accomodating the differences, until men have given vent to their fury, by dipping their swords in blood, and sheathing them in the bowels of each other.

From * this source proceeds the calamities of war, those terrible scenes of desolation, and all those direful trains of misery, naturally result from this bitter spring, the fatal influences of furious lusts, and the violent suggestions of revengeful passions, therefore, disputes of this horrid nature, should be carefully avoided, and the first motions of anger intirely suppressed. War † considered in itself, is the destruction

B 2

of

* Although I never was at the sacking of a city, or the taking of a town by storm; I have heard of *Cromwel's* taking *Drogheda* in *Ireland*, and murdering men, women, and children. I have likewise read of Count *Tilly's* sacking the city of *Magdeburgh*, and cutting the throats of 22,000. The miseries of which, are impossible to be described, or thought upon, by a person of humanity, without horror and the utmost detestation.

† *Ninus* is said to be the first, who afflicted his friends and neighbours with the calamities of war, that so, without any regard to truth, or duty, he might enlarge his dominion; by all manner of violence. St. *Austin* observes, that *Julius Cæsar* threw off the natural love of his country; and gave way to oppression, to satisfy his ambitious lust of empire. *Maximinus the Thracian*, most ungratefully murdered the emperor *Alexander*, in a very base and treacherous manner, that he might succeed

of society, of creatures, formed after the divine image, and for whom God has so high a value, that for the security of their lives, and to deter them from murdering each other, he made it a standing law, that *who so sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.* But instead of observing this equitable, and unchangeable law, or reverencing the authority of the supreme Lawgiver, men openly defy the threatenings of infinite Majesty, and are so busied in contriving engines of death, for destroying their own species by multitudes, that they seem entirely divested of humanity, and wholly to delight in executing such designs, as will most distress their fellow-creatures, and involve them in the utmost extremity.

These tragical preparations, and their frightful consequences, tender minds cannot contemplate without exquisite horror, and the highest

succeed to his empire : not all the great favours, and extraordinary benefits, he had received from that monarch, could hinder him, when in pursuit of the golden prize, from plunging so deep into perfidiousness and cruelty.

Josephus informs us, that when *Nero* was emperor of *Rome*, he sent an army against the *Jews*, under the command of *Vespasian*, and *Titus* his son, which caused the most dreadful slaughter and desolation. For an innumerable company of *Jews*, in the course of this war, were either slain, or killed themselves, or perished through famine, or other miseries. Above twenty thousand *Jews* were killed in one day at *Cesarea*, which soon made the whole body of them desperate, and to do all the mischief they could, wheresoever they came, by burnings and slaughters : and wherever they found resistance, and making slaves of the rest, till the country was covered with fire and blood, and nothing left them to trust to, but some fortified towns, which by degrees, were all subdued, with the most dismal slaughter that ever were.

highest degree of amazement. Men, fired with hopes of extending their dominions, and acquiring the enchanting honours of a kingdom, attempt whatever is right in their own eyes, and are so elevated with the dazzling glories of conquest, that the orphan's tears will not restrain their impetuous desires ; nor meeting the King of terrors make them afraid : but, regardless of any dangers, and inexorable to the melting entreaties of the widow, they presumptuously hazard their lives, and pursue their destructive schemes with vigor. Men, by being accustomed to inhuman enterprizes, and by unnaturally sporting themselves with blood, become so hardened in their unrelenting barbarities, that no importunities will soften their obdurate hearts, nor the divine menaces bring them to repentance, or relax their diabolical determinations. While their heads are full of such stratagems, and their evil hearts corrupted with rancour, they seldom observe the immutable laws of equity, or listen to the secret reprovings of conscience, but passion is their principal instructor, and whatsoever power they can grasp, instead of employing it, in rescuing the oppressed, is employed in making them more miserable, by hindering others from redressing their grievances.

In order to prosecute their fatal designs, to exercise their brutality unmolested, and consummate their barbarity with triumph, magistrates are violently deprived of their autho-

thority, and mankind the advantages of civil government ; the properties of innocent people are unlawfully seized, and men know not what to call their own, nor to whom they may complain ; or where to meet with suitable redress. The bountiful gifts of heaven are egregiously abused, and the fruits of the earth revengefully spoiled, and though these blessings were liberally intended for men, and the comfortable nourishment of their lives, yet, their intention is not much heeded, and the kindness of heaven contemptuously overlooked ; but every opportunity is watched to render those blessings useless, and forcibly hinder each other from enjoying the divine liberality.

Provinces of vast extent are almost totally depopulated, and families in the utmost consternation flying for refuge, that they may escape those execrable outrages, as knowing that whatsoever they possess over night, they may be plundered of in the morning ; and exposed to the fury of beasts, or to men more savage than beasts. And what is still more dreadful, as if the land was not ample enough for slaughter, or sufficient to exercise the various scenes of cruelty, the men, thus dextrous in the dismal art of killing, and what is called the laudable excellency of war, have brought the most distant elements in the world, to conspire together, and interchangeably assist in the destruction of mankind. They have contrived to burn each other in the water, and to drown their enemies in liquid fire ; to turn their vessels

sels into floating batteries, and to make the ocean itself a field of blood.

And probably that is the least considered, which should be most thought of; and which carries with it inconceivably more horror, namely, that when potent kingdoms are embroiled in war, and different nations obstinately contend for victory, the immediate ruin to which the contending parties are exposed, is but very little heeded ; if at all dreaded, by any of those powers, thus formidably engaged.

Malevolent beings are so intent upon mischief, that the *one thing needful* is entirely neglected, and creatures endowed with the noble powers of reason, instead of employing them in praising their Creator, and magnifying the amazing works of Providence, employ those powers in breathing revenge, and in perpetrating the blackest scenes of horror.

This is a melancholy subject for contemplation, and a deplorable sight, to the calm inhabitants above, to behold the degeneracy of the intellectual world, the divine offspring of heaven, who were originally endowed with bowels of compassion, and invested with the generous principles of love, so changed in their natures, that from heaven-born creatures, they are now transformed into sons of earth, and tearing one another in pieces; for what some possess, and others most greedily covet.

Nothing more degrades the dignity of human nature, or more demonstrates the wretched degeneracy of mankind, than for reasonable beings

beings to abandon their Maker, and to live in actual rebellion against him, in the very fundamental part of his government, by obstinately violating those laws, that naturally incline men to love God, and their neighbour, as God hath loved them. But perverse minds, by disregarding this divine principle, and wilfully opposing the unexceptionable rules thereof, subject themselves to the resentment of an avenging Deity, and do so provoke their almighty Sovereign, that from being the instruments of his glory, he makes them the executioners of his wrath, and direful vengeance upon one another.

While men are thus quarrelling about their earthly possessions, and making God's bounty to them the occasion of violence, the prince of the power of the air, the usurping god of this world, works so powerfully in the children of disobedience, by subtilly insinuating himself into their affections, and amusing them with the grand objects of ambition, that at length they become willing slaves, and perpetual drudges, to the follies of corrupt nature. By such base artifices, the deceiver so captivates unwary mortals, that they insensibly sacrifice themselves to his delusions, and fall by his snaring devices, into the irrecoverable gulph of miseries ; so that while men are thus fatally influenced, and exposed to the swift arrows of destruction, souls are snatched from the gross allurements of time, and plunged into the unfathomable ocean of eternity, without reflecting

ting upon the shocking change of such, as are unprepared for the sudden stroke of death ; or answering at the tremendous bar of divine justice.

These considerations on the fearful havock of war, and horrid scenes of misery introduced into the world, by the rapacious powers of ambition, and by mens affecting sovereignty over each other ; were there no other evils, these alone, are sufficient to afflict our souls, and fill our minds with the perplexing images of grief. But if we consider the disquietudes, that result from unforeseen misfortunes, from the slanderous reports of venomous tongues, and from the unavoidable infirmities of our natures, they will prove so many additional sources of woe, that notwithstanding our firmest resolutions, we shall be apt to sink under those disasters, and the fears which they occasion in our minds, will darken the brightest ideas, and mingle bitterness with all our enjoyments.

Divine goodness is our only support, and the principal stay of the whole creation, from thence we derive all our security, and the solid hopes of a blessed, and glorious immortality : was it not considered in this light, the calamities, I say, resulting from war, and those our present being subject us to, would be grievous beyond imagination, and so affect our minds with the overwhelming agonies of sorrow, as would render them incapable of sober reflection, or of maintaining any tolerable de-

gree of comfort. For brutes do not act more cruelly, or so beneath their original character, as mankind does over all the earth ; nor are pain, and vexation so sensibly felt, by any tribes among the brute creation, as among the children of men.

Was this earthly globe to be strictly surveyed, by some spirit of a superior order, it would be found such a theatre of madness, such an unaccountable maze of folly, as would move his refined, and tender nature, to a very painful degree, were it not allayed by a clear sight, of that wise and good Providence, which strongly works in the midst of all, and will, in the end, bring good out of evil, order out of confusion, and clearly vindicate the ways of God to men. And therefore, in all our tribulations, would we, instead of encreasing our misery, by labouring to feed our vanity, or to unfold the secret operations of Providence, humbly submit ourselves to almighty God, and look with singleness of heart to him, the watchful guardian of the universe, he would soon mitigate our sufferings, and give us brigther views of his judgments.

In thus submitting to our adorable Creator, we should act more like dependent beings, and better support the dignity of moral agents, than in disputing about the depths of infinite wisdom, or enquiring, with the inquisitive eye of presumption, into divine mysteries, which in this dark vale of misery, and shadow of ignorance and death, will be incomprehensible,

hensible, will infinitely exceed the bounds of human understanding, and the utmost reach of man's penetration.

Were these considerations revolved in our minds, and impregnated with a celestial warmth in our hearts, we should be so influenced by omnipotent power, and by an experimental sense of divine goodness, as would cause us wholly to confide in him, who has often succoured us in the day of trial, and made his powerful arm bare in our defence.

So that however dejected our souls may be, or however wearied with seeking for a quiet retreat, after all our researches, and fruitless enquiries, this is our unspeakable satisfaction, and a sufficient reason for us to rejoice ; that we have a sanctuary of rest in God, and an asylum of absolute safety in him, from all those storms that surround us, and render our passage dangerous, through this boisterous, and tempestuous sea.

Whatever terrors may proceed from human frailty, or violent agitations we may be thrown into, by the surprising commotions of a perishable world, or sudden changes of this uncertain life, in the midst of the greatest revolutions, and through all these innumerable vicissitudes ; God is unchangeably the same ; *the same God, yesterday, to-day, and for ever.* Let the fury of men be ever so great, or their assaults the most desperate, it is as impossible for the feeble power of man, to revoke the mighty power of God, as it is to change the course of

the stars, or to obstruct the meridian brightness of the sun.

When the inspired writers describe divine Majesty, and that sovereignty God exerciseth in heaven, and in earth, they speak of it in such lofty language, as peremptorily declares all created powers are vain, and that the strongest efforts of men and angels, when put in competition against the Almighty, are as incapable of resisting his authority, as those of the meanest, and most contemptible insect. *All nations, says the prophet, are as the drop of the bucket, and counted as the small dust of the ballance. Behold, God taketh up the isles as a very little thing. It is he that fitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers ; that stretcheth out the heavens like a curtain, and spreadeth them out like a tent to dwell in. Lift then up your eyes on high, who hath created those things, that bringeth out their host by number, he calleth them all by their names, by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power, not one faileth. Hast thou not known, that the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary ? There is no searching of his understanding, and his ways are past finding out.*

How pompously do the sacred pages declare God's power, with what ravishing charms they display his glory ! Were these divine records attentively considered, and had we, in our inward sharpest engagements, or bitterest conflict with outward evils, but an eye to God's glorious

glorious perfections, we need not be under any terrifying apprehensions, nor dread the most intimidating powers of nature, for being favoured with God's protection, and secure of his special presence, our souls may rest undisturbed, and maintain a rational confidence in his mercy, who has promised never to leave us, but will guide us with safety through these tumultuous regions, and bring us to an unalterable state, a state of perfect glory and blessedness.

Since God does graciously vouchsafe us his protection, it must argue a degree of madness, beyond imagination, for us to desert so generous a Guardian, and trust to the strength of mutable objects, when we might have been sheltered by Omnipotence, and defended by that divine power, which is more secure than the strongest bulwarks, and more impregnable than the hardest rocks. Well might the Psalmist express himself thus, upon consideration of the divine greatness, and man's preservation under the divine protection. *The Lord is my fortress, and my rock, and my deliverer, in whom I will trust, my buckler, and the horn also of my salvation. God, says he, is my refuge and strength, a present help in trouble, and therefore I will not fear, though the earth be moved, and though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof rage and swell, and though the mountains shake at the tempest of the same. The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge.* A firm

firm reliance on God's powerful providence, and a stedfast faith in God's divine promises, will brighten every gloomy prospect, turn our deepest melancholy into joy, and our bitterest contemplations into the sweetest reflections *.

The use we should make of what has been delivered, is, that as we are here assembled to rejoice, for the conquests gained by his Majesty's troops, and those of his allies, in the present war, by defeating the sinister projects of our enemies, and enabling *Britain* to maintain her just pretensions, in opposition to the encroaching power of *France*, and the designing views of that perfidious court. So likewise our successes should be motives to obedience, to kindle the celestial flames of internal devotion, and

* These general observations on war, and their malignant consequences, were not intended to discourage us from defending our country, or opposing the unjustifiable encroachments of our enemies, or obeying the lawful commands of our Prince, but they were designed to abate the fury of men, and to prevent their engaging in warlike disputes, without the utmost necessity, and upon the most urgent occasion. For, as one justly observes, force is the last remedy, and should never be made use of, until every other method had been tried, and rendered intirely ineffectual. If the aggressor will hearken to calm reason, and submit to such terms as are agreeable to it, there ought to be an end of the controversy; but if he will be obstinate, and refuse to do this, then indeed the war is just and allowable; because it becomes necessary, and the only possible method left, for redressing such grievances, and preserving our own rights. See more to the same purpose, in the celebrated *Charron*, in his excellent treatise of wisdom, as translated by Dr. Stanhope, the late Dean of Canterbury. Vol. iii.

and to extol the care of divine Omnipotence, for the exertion of his power and wisdom, in obstructing the malicious schemes of our enemies. Because prosperity is not always the effect of industry, nor the noblest achievements, acquired merely by sagacity, but man's happiness depends upon the blessing of God, and upon the divine concurrence, which is no otherwise to be procured, but by exercising the amiable precepts of virtue, and the sublime duties of practical religion.

But should we bid defiance to him, who directs the fate of nations, or refuse God's blessing upon those reasonable terms, instead of defending us with his almighty power, he may finally deprive us of his mercies, may leave us to the fury of blind passions, and chastise us for our incorrigibleness, with the abandoned workers of iniquity. For the spirit of God came upon *Azariah*, and he said, *the Lord is with you, while ye be with him, and if ye seek him, he will be found of you ; but if ye forsake him, he also will forsake you.* While we are shouting with the voice of praise, and commemorating the greatness of our successes, we should not forget the kindness of Providence, and its powerful interposition in the day of battle, but we should with grateful hearts, devoutly confess, and humbly acknowledge, *that we got not the land in possession by our own sword, neither was it our own arm that saved us, but it was God's right-hand, and his holy arm, that hath gotten himself the victory.*

Whoever

Whoever is conversant in holy writ, that sacred repository of divine truths, knows that victories are constantly attributed to God, and that many Psalms were composed on such awful occasions, and intended to advance in men a venerable regard for God, and a divine elevation of soul. In God's name the *Israelites* set up their banners, and solemnly proclaimed his sovereign authority. To his arm they ascribed the glory, and attributed all their successes. Therefore, *let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches, but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, that exercise loving kindness, and judgment, and righteousness in the earth, for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.*

This is our rule in private life, and with respect to public affairs, here we should rest our hopes, and make God the principal object of all our desires and endeavours.

For notwithstanding the strongest natural security, or whatever mighty effects second causes may produce, unless the Lord keep the city, and we fight under the divine banner, the greatest human force is of little significance, and the mightiest armies are but vain.

More particularly, to exhibit God's goodness towards us, and to inflame our gratitude towards him, were we only to consider the happiness of our situation, that we have a healthful climate, as well as fruitful seasons, and

and a most plentiful soil, that abounds with all the comforts and conveniences of life, which are such instances of infinite goodness, as cannot fail of exciting the sublimest exultations, and constraining us to recognize the divine munificence, without betraying such a spirit of disingenuity, as must argue men guilty of the foulest ingratitude, who do not sing of *God's loving kindness in the morning, and tell of his truth in the night season.*

But we have farther reason to rejoice, and to cry out, *behold the works of God, how wonderfully gracious he is in his doings towards us.* When we consider the calamities we are preserved from, and the blessings that we so amply possess, we shall find them such excitements to religious joy, as will cause us, with holy admiration, publickly to proclaim the glorious praises of our Creator, and to magnify his almighty power, so signally exerted, in our defence and preservation. For, while other kingdoms are most barbarously ravaged, and exposed to the various events, and excruciating miseries of a bloody war, while thousands fall besides us, and ten thousands at our right-hand, we are crowned with peace and plenty, and enjoy our temporal, and spiritual blessings, in tranquility.

The consideration of which mercies, were we sensible of their real worth, would raise such generous dispositions in our souls, that in return for these unmerited favours, and the be-

nefits God almighty continually loads us with, it must make our breasts glow with thankfulness, and our tongues to declare the divine benignity, with the warmest strains of pious gratitude, and the moving eloquence of divine love ; especially, when we contemplate the goodness of Providence, which has shewn us such particular regard, by encompassing our land, with the sea, and fortifying it with the walls thereof, that we are not so liable to incursions, or to be murdered and plundered by foreign invaders.

God is eternally worthy of our highest praises, and has so interested himself in our behalf, that we owe to him the profoundest reverence, and our most unfeigned, and constant submission, to his righteous and holy laws. This is the best acknowledgment of his mercies, and the most suitable method of honouring him, who has so wonderfully preserved us, in not permitting the sword to reach our land, or making our country the seat of war, when other populous countries are flowing with blood, and covered with the dead bodies of the slain, we possess the blessing and happiness of peace. So that it may be justly said of *England*, that *as the hills stand about Jerusalem, so the Lord standeth round about his people*, even so has the Almighty environed this kingdom, and defended it on all sides by his Providence.

In this land of safety, we live in the greatest affluence, and dwell in all possible security ; every

every man sits quietly under his own vine, and eats the fruit of his own fig-tree ; is liberally supplied by the bounteous hand of heaven, and enjoys a constant succession of all these blessings, without any hazard of being molested, or having the course of justice obstructed. For, while under his present Majesty's happy administration, and under the protection of wise and good laws, we are in no danger of suffering by cruel tyrants, or being scourged by the rod of arbitrary power, nor having our dreams interpreted by merciless inquisitors, and our actions condemned by those sacred butchers, who are continual terrors to mankind, and severe plagues to society.

To encrease our felicity, and compleat our happiness, the protestant religion is not only established, and protected among us, and the profession of it publickly countenanced, and encouraged, but we also possess our civil and religious rights, with as much freedom as can reasonably be desired by any, who do not aim at anarchy, and unlimited licentiousness. These privileges are of such value to mankind, that one would imagine, the barely mentioning them, were sufficient to make us discover their excellencies, and to understand their use and intention, which was to awaken the consciences of sleepy offenders, that stupid transgressors might be brought to repentance, by those affecting charms of kindness, and engaging motives of love.

Lest these inducements should be disregarded, and the indulgent methods of heaven perverted, I shall employ the remainder of this discourse in persuading men to abominate the filthy practices of sin, and to observe the benevolent purposes of Providence, as the likeliest expedient to secure our liberties, to prevent the dire effects of *Popish* cruelty, and the malicious sallies of enthusiastical fury.

By yielding to the sceptre of divine mercy, and avoiding all such maxims as gender strife, and foment divisions *, we shall be capable of silencing their clamours, and frustrating the attempts

* Union will be a wall of defence, which nothing can demolish, but our intestine divisions. Every age confirms this maxim of truth, *a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand*. It was the differences that were fomented between *Aristobulus* and *Hircanus*, that brought *Pompey* to *Jerusalem*, by whom they were made a *Roman* province. The christians lost *Palestine* by their perpetual feuds, and reproachful divisions, although it was purchased at a prodigious expence of treasure and blood. I need not mention how *England* suffered by domestic quarrels, and a civil war. It was a maxim, laid down by Cardinal *Ricbieu*, that subtil politician, and able statesman of his time, that *England* could never be destroyed but by herself. It has ever been the policy of *Rome*, and of the court of *France*, to disperse a great number of *Jesuits*, through protestant kingdoms and states, to sow the seeds of discord among them, that they might, thereby, expose their weakness, and find an opportunity to destroy them. What the late King *William*, of blessed memory, recommended to his parliament, in his last excellent speech from the throne, I heartily wish was engraven upon our hearts, and zealously preached and practised by all protestants. Let there be no other distinction heard among us, for the future, but of those who are for the protestant religion, and the present establishment; and of those who mean a *Popish* prince, and a *French* government.

attempts of such daring adversaries, be entitled to the peculiar protection of heaven, and to the continuance of God's gracious aid, and never-failing assistance. Notwithstanding the greatness of these blessings, and those refreshing showers of divine favour, if we continue barren under these celestial influences, or wantonly abuse the divine beneficence, we, for the misapplication of those mercies, and neglecting to cultivate the genuine fruits of righteousness, shall perish by the hand that would have preserved us, and find the God of life a consuming fire.

Whatever inferences men may draw from infinite goodness, should they voluntarily persist in debauching their rational natures, the Almighty, without any impeachment of his authority, may come forth, arrayed in terrible majesty, and put his fierce wrath in execution, by exercising that power in our destruction, which he so visibly employs in our preservation. To prevent incurring the divine severity, we must mortify every domineering lust, and acquire an heavenly frame of mind, and such an awful sense of God's omnipresence, as will restrain the most impetuous desires, that our devotion may not end with the day, nor be spent in the sacrifice of our lips, but that the result of our piety, may manifest itself in our lives, and appear in holiness and righteousness all our days. Since then our safety lies in observing God's commands, we must not obey the rebellious motions of the heart, neither
must

must we act seditiously against the King of heaven; but vigorously labour to obstruct malevolent proceedings, and to establish peace, and unanimity among ourselves.

Although we are generally agreed in supporting our temporal affairs, we are not so unanimous in our spiritual concerns, but men are more assiduous about abstruse enquiries, and being at the head of some particular sect, than in purifying their sinful hearts, or ordering their behaviour by the rules of unalterable truth, and invariable goodness. Have you any regard for your present interest, or future felicity? Let all such hurtful enquiries subside; and utterly detest all such pernicious debates.

Were the practical duties of religion urged more, and controversial points meddled with less, these injurious contests would quickly give way, and an holy emulation soon take place; and men, instead of cherishing the seeds of discord, would be brought to have no other contention, except that of striving to excel each other in virtue, and in promoting the amiable, and laudable principles of compassion and love. If men are otherwise minded, and so hotly engaged in disputes, as to neglect their main support, they may plunge themselves into such inextricable difficulties, as may occasion them to mourn when it is too late, and to repent of their perverseness, even *in sackcloth and ashes*. Would reasonable beings enjoy the divine friendship, and escape the deplorable

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consequences of sin, they must extinguish the raging flames of ambition, by the cooling streams of humility, that they may spiritually approve themselves to God, and strenuously exert their faculties, in proclaiming God's honour and glory.

Unless our minds are properly armed with fortitude, and divinely supported with the auxiliaries of heaven, we shall not only be worsted by our temporal enemies, but be also totally defeated in our last moments, and rendered incapable of sustaining that terrible combat.

Trust not then to the empty grandeur of human life, nor to any of its ~~fugacious~~^{flue} and glittering enjoyments. Could we arrive at the pinnacle of earthly glory, or obtain the universal command of this terrestrial globe, it could not profit us in the day of wrath, nor be of any security, against the force of irresistible power.

The King of terrors is inexorable, and pays no more regard to the monarch, than he does to the slave, but seizes indifferently on all, and enters the palace of a prince, with as little ceremony, as he does the habitation of the poorest cottager. Trophies of honour will not retard the fatal stroke, nor the hero's conquests deliver him from judgment. Grandeur and magnificence are but worthless cyphers, and instantly vanquish at those awful periods.

Let us therefore enter a protest against sin, and against all the guileful arts of iniquity, that we may be prepared for that dreadful tribunal,
where

where the boasted triumphs of the wicked end, where all the objects of their pride, and vanity cease, and where none will have any reason to rejoice, but such as have acted, under the direction of God's wise and good Providence, and used all his dispensations, as means to sanctify their natures, to make them more vigilant in employing their time, and talents, in forwarding the divine purposes. Withdraw, then, your affections from sublunary delights, and place them entirely upon him, before whom the greatest armies fall, and the mightiest fleets are driven to destruction, for if we make God the object of our hope, and all our actions to center in him, we shall be comforted in every stage of life, be supported under the agonizing sorrows of death, and ride with safety through all the storms of time, be carried with joy and gladness into the blissful regions of eternity.

Then shall we sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the lamb, saying, great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are thy ways thou King of saints; for ever art thou to be praised, who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? The Lord is my strength and my song, the Lord is become my salvation; for thou hast been my defence and refuge, in the day of my trouble. Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing; for thou, O God, art my refuge, and my merciful God.

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R E M A R K S.

IN whatever part of this discourse mention is made of the divine interposition, or the signal marks of divine favour towards us, I do not thereby suppose, the Deity acts from partial regards, or that he forces the order of the creation, or recedes from his original determinations. But what God does in any particular case, or by a particular dispensation, he does agreeable to the tenor of his providence, and to the general course of things ; without any violence to the established laws of nature, or restraint upon the liberty of moral agents. It would be absurd to imagine, that God acts relatively to particular persons, or against the general design of his providence, or in any such manner, as betrays partiality in his favour, cruelty in his judgments, and arbitrariness in his proceedings, which are directly opposite to the benign temper of him, who *maketh his sun to rise on the evil, and the good, and causeth his rain to fall, on the just, and the unjust.* The equality of God's dealings with his creatures is certainly relative to their whole existence, and therefore cannot be measured by any temporary methods, which infinite wisdom shall make choice of, in conducting, and promoting, his grand design. It is objected, that God, in choosing the *Jewish* nation, and bestowing such extraordinary privileges upon that people, seems to act repugnant to his general plan, and to that declaration of mercy, which expressly declares, that *God is no respecter of persons.* The *Israelites* were God's chosen people, not from any particular regard to them, but in order to answer the wise ends, and generous purposes, of his providence ; which are full of

love and overflowing benevolence. The religious, and sagacious Mr. Lock, in his exposition on the ninth of the *Romans*, sufficiently vindicates the divine proceedings, and clears the Almighty of partiality and injustice. For he understands what is said of the potter, who *has power to make one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour*, out of the same lump of clay, to refer to men nationally, and not personally, or with reference to their eternal state, but to that right God has of exalting one nation, or depressing another, according to his good pleasure, and to the deserts and demerits of kingdoms. There is another amazing instance of divine providence, that is liable to the same objection, was it not partiality in the supreme Being, to distress the greater part of mankind, and to put them under the *Roman* government? The *Romans*, considered in a religious view, cannot be entitled to this preheminence. They were as criminal as the rest of mankind. What could there be in the character of those robbers, and murderers of their own species, that should procure them universal empire. They were indeed remarkable for their valour, and love of liberty, but they were also remarkable for their perfidiousness, for their gross idolatries, and horrid cruelties. But why God should permit such bloody tyrants to reign, or persons so opposite to his infinite goodness, to pursue their horrid brutalities, and not totally defeat their destructive schemes, may be one of the secrets of providence, and what we are unable to account for, without considering them as instruments in the hands of God, and the means of scourging a sinful people, and therefore, the light in which we should view them, ought to be this, that the unmerited glory to which they were advanced, was the stupendous work of divine providence, for accomplishing its gracious

gracious designs, and not any affect of partiality towards that people. Whatever inequality may seemingly appear in particular providences, that inequality is greatly removed, and those providences accounted for, by considering them as parts of the general plan, and calculated to promote the good of the whole, and of each individual. Something like this, if not wholly agreeable to it, Mr. *Wollaston* uses as an argument to reconcile the scheme of particular providences, to the general system of nature, by supposing, that such laws of nature, and such a series of causes and effects, may be originally designed, that not only general provisions may be made, for the several species of beings, but even particular cases, at least, many of them may be also provided for, without innovations, or alterations, in the order of nature. This excellent author urges the matter still further, by drawing arguments from the planets, and bigger parts of the world, which are disposed into such places, and orders, as make a noble system, without having their natural powers of attraction, or any of the laws of motion restrained, or altered ; says, that it is possible, men, whose natures, and actions, are foreknown, may be introduced into the world, in such times, and places, and other circumstances, as that their acts, and behaviour, may not only coincide with the general plan, but also answer many private cases too. See *religion of nature delineated*, p. 103, 104.

T H E E N D.



